

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Survey finds unhealthy products are widely available in Riverside County's retail stores**

Riverside, CA – June 2020

In Riverside County, 3 out of every 8 stores still have tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, such as shelves with candy or toys all under three feet in height. This finding is a part of a new survey released today from the 2019 Health Stores for a Healthy Community (HSHC) Survey which assessed the marketing of tobacco products and alcohol, the availability of condoms and healthy/unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

“Our community’s young people are surrounded by unhealthy ads and options in the retail environment,” said Kim Saruwatari, Riverside University Health System-Public Health Department Director. “We can largely prevent unhealthy outcomes by limiting accessibility to tobacco and alcohol products, increasing healthy food options and getting more physical active.”

The HSHC campaign is a statewide collaboration between tobacco and alcohol use prevention, sexually transmitted disease prevention, and nutrition partners to examine what is being sold within our community stores and how those products are marketed. The HSHC Survey builds upon previous HSHC research released in 2014 and 2017 to determine if communities are improving accessibility, marketing and availability of healthy products, especially to youth. This year the survey assessed nearly 8,000 randomly selected tobacco retail stores in all 58 California counties. The stores included convenience, gas, grocery, liquor, and drug, as well as tobacco-focused stores.

“As a high school student, I clearly see how the tobacco industry is targeting youth to be the next generation of smokers” said Jacky Celedon, senior at Shadow Hills High School and President of Interact Club which aims to decrease youth access to tobacco in local retail stores within the City of Indio. “The use of flavored vaping pens has become such a fad I can’t help but be concerned about the future health of people my age who chose to use these dangerous products.”

### **The survey found the following for Riverside County:**

- About one out of seven stores surveyed sell flavored, non-cigarette tobacco products. Of these, 90% of stores sold menthol cigarettes. Whereas fresh fruits and vegetables were only available in less than half of stores.
- Six out seven stores sold little cigars/cigarillos and three out of five sold chewing tobacco. These products can be sold individually and come in a full variety flavors, potentially more appealing to young people.

- At convenience store checkout areas in Riverside County, sugary beverages were six times more available than water. California teens consume the equivalent of 39 pounds of sugar each year from sugary drinks.
- Flavored alcoholic beverages were sold in almost 4 out of every 5 convenience stores. Alcoholic beverages that come in sweet and fruity flavors can be appealing to kids.
- The rate of stores that sell condoms unlocked increased from 36% in 2016 to 46% in 2019. Small markets have the lowest availability of condoms on unlocked shelves at 33%, while drug stores have the highest availability of condoms on unlocked shelves at 90%. This is important because in California in 2018, bacterial STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) significantly increased.

For full state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit [www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com](http://www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com).

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